

THE “INITIATIVE” PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

From Friday, September 7, 2007 at 2:00 p.m.

To Friday, September 14, 2007 at 5:00 p.m.

Reorganization – Natural Resources

- Combine Departments of Conservation and IF&W (Department of Natural Resources).
- Combine Departments of Marine Resources and Agriculture (Department of Agricultural and Marine Resources). They both oversee natural commodities.
- Create Super Natural Resource Agencies(SNRA)...the correct way. ALL of the recent studies have pointed to the “sense of place” which makes Maine special. The Super Natural Resource Agencies are responsible for protecting and enhancing that place. Combine DEP, Conservation, IF&W, DMR, and Agriculture only if you must. What I am suggesting is to increase funding for the programs within these Departments. Super Natural Resource Agencies cannot compete with the big boys. Human Services and Education will always have a greater need. The combined general fund budget for all of the Super Natural Resource Agencies is less than 3% of the total state budget. The Legislature needs to decide if Super Natural Resource Agencies are essential to the State or not. If they are, they should be funded an effective level. If they are not essential, lets eliminate them and look for other places to fill the budget gap.

Reorganization – Other

- Combine Departments of PFR and DECD (Department of Economics).
- Undo the congregation of financial management and HR staff within the DAFS. The lack of program expertise in these groups has only forced remaining program staff to assume the liaison roles between program and service groups that the now DAFS staff once had.
- Undo the merger of DHS and BDS. It has been an unmitigated disaster combining two enormous and difficult to manage agencies into a single huge unmanageable agency.
- Fold the Maine Turnpike Authority into the Dept. of Transportation. That should save on administrative costs at a minimum. This is a redundant independent agency that performs the same function as an existing State agency.
From: Andrew Vellani; 69 Bowman St., Farmingdale; Boccemon555@gmail.com
- Place all telecommunications services and Data services in the State under one agency. We currently have separate Judicial, Legislative, and more creating redundant positions and waste. Technical resources do not need to be duplicated as the only necessary positions would be positions with spending authority. By working more closely with the University system backbone, nearly all State, County, and even city level communications could save millions of dollars a year by allowing purchasing and centralization of services. The current local service providers such as Verizon and numerous independent Telcos would no longer be placing a "tax" on governmental communications as it could all be run over data services.

From: Thomas Maher; 84 Dearborn Dr. Stetson ME 04488; Narsbars@TDS.NET; 296-2720

- Combine the states law enforcement. For example the state police can absorb the marine patrol, fire marshals, game wardens, forest rangers and others into one agency. This should only be done for the state level agencies. New Jersey did it for some of their agencies and other states too.

Legislature

- Reducing the size of our State Legislature would be the best way to start saving money. I believe one Senator from each county and half of the present Representatives could easily take care of this state's business.

From: Galen Violette; Brunswick, ME

- Repeal the legislative term limit law. The lack of experience among lawmakers has meant that the Executive branch has been able to operate without sufficient oversight by the Legislature.
- Put a limit on the number of new bills that can be introduced in each legislative session. No legislator can be even vaguely familiar with the content of over 2000 bills each session let alone understand the potential impact of a significant number of them.
- We have too many elected officials in state government. This should be the first place for us to start. Spend only the money we have not the money we don't have. If we must do without then so be it.

From: Douglas Britton; Bangor; dougbritton75@yahoo.com

- My understanding is that suggestions have been proposed to reduce the size of the Legislature. While I would welcome fiscal analysis of such proposals, I suspect that the savings would be minimal relative to the substantial negative impact to public involvement in decision making that such a change would effect. The Maine Legislature has small districts whose members are consequently very close to and responsive to the public. This is a great strength of Maine and should not be lost. Furthermore, reducing the size of the legislature has the potential to weaken this co-equal branch of government. Given the part-time nature of the legislature and the low pay that legislators receive in Maine for their extensive public service, I am disinclined to support reducing the Legislature. Please seriously consider maintaining the Legislature.

From: Alan Cobo-Lewis; 19 Winterhaven Dr.; alanc@maine.edu

- We strongly believe substantial savings in the cost of state government can be made by reducing the size of the Maine Legislature. I believe an analysis of the size of our legislature compared to other larger states would show we can and should take this step. If the legislature were truly serious about controlling the cost of state government they would look hard at this option in a non-partisan and serious way.

From: Watson and Joanne Clark; 25 Aquamarine Court, Auburn; watsonclark@hotmail.com; 782-8995

- Run our state gov't like they do in New Hampshire, no need to have so many bodies in Augusta. If we can reform the school admins. we can reform Augusta as well.

From: Simmie Butts; Gorham Maine; sim_672@yahoo.com

- When I visited the statehouse in Augusta, I expected to see a small legislative body. When I walked in, I was shocked to see as many members as the legislature in Texas, where I grew up! When I did an online search, I found that Maine has way too many representatives per capita in comparison with most other states, including similar rural ones. I do not understand how the state can justify the expense of such a large legislature, including all the staff expenses and overhead. Even if it's not a huge amount, this would be a good place to cut to show Maine citizens that the state really does care about our onerous tax burden. Thank you for soliciting suggestions from Mainers!
From: Teresa Price; 75 Farms Edge Road, North Yarmouth, ME 04097;
Teresadfp@aol.com
- The legislature should only be in session once every 2 years, and the number of representatives should be cut in half.

State Employee Salaries and Benefits

- Like most employed people whose employers provide benefits, state employees should pay for a percentage of their health insurance.
From: Jana Zimmerman; 81 Oakhurst Road, Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107;
zjubalz@aol.com; 799-1396
- Few companies provide pensions in this day of 401Ks. The state should discontinue the pension program and set up 401Ks.
From: Jana Zimmerman; 81 Oakhurst Road, Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107;
zjubalz@aol.com; 799-1396

DHHS Issues

- Maine is getting a massive surge of immigrants into our communities and it is up to us to take care of them. WHY? Why should they get all this extra aid when our communities can't afford it. Either say no more immigrants or no more aid for immigrants that come to our state.
From: Mat Curtis; mathewc973@adelphia.net
- An independent committee should be commissioned to audit the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). I am sure DHHS helps many people in Maine who truly are in need. I am also sure there are many people receiving funds who are well able to earn for themselves. People receiving taxpayer money should be public information. If welfare records were public information, our DHHS expenses would certainly be significantly reduced.
From: Galen Violette; Brunswick, ME
- In my home are two foster children, one "graduated" from therapeutic needs from an agency. The agency is not able to now serve the one boy because they are a therapeutic program. They recommend that we have another agency and another babysitter come into our home and to babysit the second child. This seems like more admin oversight (costly). Their response to me was... "We have one family that has three agencies in their home for their four children. This seems very costly to me. Right now we are trying to adopt these

children and finding it very difficult to find funds for a babysitter qualified to offer this service, plus save money for the state.

From: Sherry Poland; shertoy@aol.com; 782-4478

- Savings must never fall most heavily on those least able to cope with life because they are elderly and poor, working poor falling further and further behind, the disabled, those who suddenly find themselves chronically ill or injured, children who are a large portion of those living in poverty. Our aim should be to care for those who need our help, provide excellent services for our children who will form our next generation. Failing to consider the less fortunate will only make all our lives more difficult. Children without hope become the future criminals, drug users, etc. filling our jails and costing far more than we would spend now to make sure they succeed. Those who are hungry cannot fulfill their best potential. Think of the wasted talent that could make this a better state, country, and world. Those who have no hope become abusers of their wives and children and other members of society. We need to look at the tax code that allows the gap to widen between the very rich and the poorest. We can no longer stand the "let them eat cake" philosophy that has been abroad in our government for the last 30 years. We are poorer for it.

From: Dolores Vail; Falmouth

- AUTOMATE FOOD STAMPS! Give recipients a swipe card, only allow the purchase of fresh healthy food, and monitor the whole thing with a single person who runs reports against a database that lists what they bought and when.
- The DHHS has a number of programs serving the incapacitated elderly, mentally retarded, mentally ill, and minor children in receipt of SSI benefits in which the State of Maine serves in the capacity of Social Security appointed Representative Payee. As a government entity, Maine is entitled to collect a fee for each and every one of these thousands of individuals every month. This requires application to and approval by the regional social Security office. As of December 2005, the monthly fee was the lesser of \$33 or 10% of the individual's combined Social Security and SSI benefit. Dollar fees to be collected are adjusted in December to reflect the COLA. To my knowledge, the State of Maine has never collected this fee. It has the potential to generate a great deal of revenue in return for this very important service the DHHS provides to thousands of incapacitated persons statewide. The state earns this revenue and should be collecting it. I am unaware of the actual total number of persons this affects, but it would be worth somebody's time to make a few phone calls to determine how much money this could be.

From: gr8tbaker2007@gmail.com

Education – K-12

- Abandon Baldacci's plans to Consolidate the school districts and abolish four County jails. We do not need hundreds more people on the Unemployment rolls.

From: James William Cummings; Jwc1870@AOL.com

- Dismiss the current Secretary of Education Susan Herndon for her role in the consolidation plan.

From: James William Cummings; Jwc1870@AOL.com

- Stop the lap top computer program for school kids. Buy each school a certain number of PC's to leave in school for every kid to share and stop buying every kid a laptop.
From: Mat Curtis; mathewc973@adelphia.net

Transportation

- Transportation - The Maine Turnpike Authority should be overseen and well regulated as well as trimmed down in terms of upper and mid management. Rules regarding expenditures such as wining and dining at expensive Portland restaurants should be considerably tightened. The money from the tolls should go directly to road maintenance and construction. There should one toll in and no toll out to reduce staffing and tourist and commerce frustration.
From: Jana Zimmerman; 81 Oakhurst Road, Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107; zjubilz@aol.com; 799-1396
- I saw an ad on TV for bicycling in Maine. A biker was saying that bicycles in Maine have the same rights and privileges as motor vehicles. This ad was paid for by the Dept. of Transportation. If this is true, shouldn't bicycles be registered and pay exise tax to the state? This could be a new source of revenue for the state as some bicycles cost up into the thousands of dollars. I believe that if bikers want the same rights on Maine roads, then they should pay to maintain the roads, just like motorists do.

Miscellaneous

- Quit spending funds you need elsewhere to purchase ponds, lakes and park land for the grossly over sized Maine Park system. Sell large tracts of Park Land.
From: James William Cummings; Jwc1870@AOL.com
- Impeach Governor Baldacci for ever attempting to subvert, diminish , abolish or otherwise affect in any negative way whatsoever any and all employment or official legally elected by the legitimate and lawful government of each and every county, municipality, city , town and plantation within the bounds on this the State of Maine. Curious, by what law did the Judges of Maine`s Supreme Court tell Baldacci any of this was in any what right or proper? Takings? It`s long past time that that law was removed from all books. Federal as well as State.
From: James William Cummings; Jwc1870@AOL.com
- Unemployment payouts, there should be a max of no more than 6 months and that is final. NO extensions. There are plenty of jobs out there just might not be desirable to some but there is work available, why should Maine tax payers have to pay these people to stay home.
From: Mat Curtis; mathewc973@adelphia.net
- The State Court system has advised they need more funds to operate in an efficient manner. In response to this I would ask if all the unpaid fines are collected would the court system have adequate funds to operate. Also should the court system even be in the credit business? All fines need to be paid at the time of conviction to greatly improve the court system or State cash flow.

- Get a true figure of how many motorized vehicles are owned and operated by the State of Maine and how much it costs to operate same. A good question to ask of department heads is how many of their employees drive a State owned vehicle to and from their home to their work site, and how far these employees live from their work site. The purchase price, fuel costs and maintenance costs for this huge fleet must be very high and must have room for savings.

From: McKenney; Ellsworth; rbm200@rr.com

- Outsource information technology services. The CIO and his enormous and highly paid staff are in way over their heads. The onerous fees being dictated by OIT are draining state program resources and is an example of doing less with more.
- Put the ill-conceived State takeover of county jails out of its misery. Stealing property from county governments is not the same as saving taxpayers money.
- Make State government totally transparent. There has been an enormous amount of cronyism under the current administration that will continue to cost taxpayers as unqualified appointees and hires hold State jobs well into the future.
- Make as many services and rule books available online as reasonably possible similar to most communities now.

*From: Jana Zimmerman; 81 Oakhurst Road, Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107;
zjubalz@aol.com; 799-1396*

- Reduce obstacles to business development. This will require the help of true successful entrepreneurs because a state employee and/or people who are employed by others just cannot understand what it takes to facilitate rather than drive away business growth. A state whose showing was poorer than Louisiana's in the same year as Katrina should be embarrassed and desperately instituting change.

*From: Jana Zimmerman; 81 Oakhurst Road, Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107;
zjubalz@aol.com; 799-1396*

- I don't want to see a janitor position on the list from the governor's office. I expect the governor and his staff to walk the walk rather than just talk the talk as in school consolidation and state running local jails. There are tremendous opportunities for consolidating state government, reducing waste, trimming upper management staff (remembering that the population in this state is smaller than most large US cities), and eliminating political crony positions. I don't know about others but my patience is wearing thin as I continue to pay tremendous state income taxes and worry what this state will blunder into next.

*From: Jana Zimmerman; 81 Oakhurst Road, Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107;
zjubalz@aol.com; 799-1396*

- I would like to make a few suggestions on how to cut costs in the department of corrections prison system. Please take a look at the long timer group, meaning the persons that have been incarcerated for 20 years or more, or at persons who are 55/60 and older. These person are far less likely to re-offend (according to national statistics) plus they (on a whole) cost the state a great deal of money in medical costs due to age, years of constant stress plus years of poor eating and often poor or non-existent preventive medical accessibility. Many of the "more mature" prisoners are often able to collect VA benefits plus many could receive Social Security benefits to live on and not be the heavy burden to the state that they are now. Take a look at the individual prisoner's record while incarcerated as far as work record, moral life style and accomplishments toward changing

their "stinking thinking" that may have placed them in the prison system to begin with. Many persons that are 60 plus years old still have family and friend contacts on the outside, and can still contribute, in a positive way to society. Thank you for considering this suggestion.

From: Sharril Saunders; P.O. Box 65 Solon, Me. 04979-0065; stministries@tds.net; 643-2172

- This is an unconventional recommendation to reduce the outflow of Maine's Treasury funds. It is recommended to negate all current special income tax exemptions. Since 1989 certain State retirees and other groups of retirees have been provided with an income tax exemption on \$6,000.00 of their pension. In the year 2000 military retirees have been provided with a similar income tax exemption. Left out were retirees affected by the (federal) Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) which affects a relatively small number of Federal retirees, State teacher and Railroad retirees. Efforts to right this wrong have been ongoing since 1989. Senator Ethan Strimling introduced LD 802 during the 123rd legislative session to provide all retirees with a similar income tax exemption, however the bill did not make it out of Committee. This was anticipated, yet, the unfairness continues to exist while the WEP-retirees already are affected by severely reduced Social Security pensions of up to 60%!!! So why these retirees should be penalized by the federal government first and additionally by the state of Maine? This is where my unconventional recommendation comes in, namely, by negating the special income tax exemption to special groups of retirees, thus treating all retirees equally. NO SPECIAL INCOME TAX EXEMPTION. This will provide far in excess of the \$10.1 million that the State is trying to "find" to balance its budget. Then, at a later date if it is found that an income tax exemption can be offered to retirees, do the right thing and provide it to ALL retirees, not just special groups. I challenge you and all legislators to address this recommendation. And, yes, I would most appreciatively like to receive a response to my recommendation, which I am requesting as per your own rules.

From: Rudi Smith; 25 Wilson Street, Topsham, ME 04086-1713; candoltd@ghi.net

- I have read the governor's proposal of the taking over of county jails. Why is it that local and county governments are the target of the state? Nothing is ever said about lowering the state income tax. Only property tax is attacked. Where do they think the income tax comes from? I do believe that a majority of people, who pay property tax, pay state income tax. I pay \$2600.00 a year for property tax in the city of Portland. I paid \$4700.00 in state income tax last year. Who is getting more of my money????????????? I think the State should consider putting the state police on the highways and have the county sheriff's patrol the towns that do not have police departments. You wouldn't need as many troopers. That would be a savings to the income tax.

From: ahanna954@maine.rr.com

- I work in State Government and I am sure my idea is covered as a protective rule by the union. However; I suggest making an attempt to weed out the less productive workers throughout all departments. There are a fair amount of employees that are unproductive that through more streamlined practices could be forced to do the job they were hired to do; or let go. Any business interested in saving money would surely not keep employees on payroll who did not actually produce work. Why should the State employees be any different?

- Make the Department of Labor account for its Penalty and Interest money. The money is spent without public accountability, and is "off budget". This money could be used to fund sorely needed office positions instead of being spent on retreats and west coast seminars.
- OPEGA should be fully funded.
- With 1/3 of the Current State employees able to retire now and another 1/3 able to retire in 5 years there is a wealth of institutional knowledge that will not be carried forth. Currently there is no mechanism in place to perform on the job training when filling a position opened up from a retiring State worker. The worker has long since gone by the time the position is filled and if the position is being filled by some one out side of that bureau it takes much longer for the person to be properly trained and up to speed. Therefore I suggest that monies be set aside from the existing training budgets to cover the cost of paying for two positions during the time the training of the new worker is being accomplished by the worker who is retiring. Depending on the position, a one to four week training program fund could be established. This would make for a more efficient transparent transition while maintaining delivery of consistent and effective service to the customer.

From: skip.hall@maine.gov

- Put the operation of all or part the State of maine telephone system (TELCO) out to bid to the private sector. Let TELCO bid for the work. Even if there was no cost difference between what a Verizon or AT&T could provide, we could benefit from their billing system. The State of Maine needs a new billing system for telephone services. There are always greater needs for scarce resources so the billing system gets patched and used another year.